

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 8, 2001

The Honorable Daniel Patrick Moynihan
Mr. Richard Parsons
Co-Chairmen
President's Commission to Strengthen Social Security
734 Jackson Place, NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Chairmen Moynihan and Parsons:

It has come to our attention that today you again plan to convene subcommittees of the President's Commission to Strengthen Social Security behind closed doors to discuss issues related to the privatization of Social Security.

We are deeply disappointed that the Commission is continuing to hold subcommittee meetings without public notice and without making provisions for public scrutiny of the materials presented to the subcommittees or the decisions made by them. This directly contradicts the Commission's earlier decision to keep the public as informed as possible about the Commission's activities. In response to our concerns about closed meetings, the Commission provided us a memorandum in August suggesting that the Commission would publish notices in the Federal Register announcing the meetings of Commission "subgroups" and make transcripts of these meetings available for public inspection.

As members of the House committees with primary jurisdiction over the Social Security program and the operation of federal advisory committees, we question the continued efforts of the Commission to shield its deliberations from public scrutiny. While closed subcommittee meetings may be technically consistent with the guidance provided by the General Services Administration, we continue to believe they violate the spirit of the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

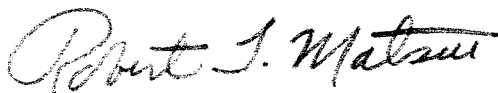
The issues facing the Commission are controversial and difficult. Secret meetings will only fuel speculation that the Commission is influenced by special interests, and continues down a predetermined path with little interest in public input. The process needs sunshine. At a minimum, the public has the right to know what information is being presented to the subcommittees and how its proposals to privatize Social Security are being developed.

To that end, we request you immediately open today's subcommittee meetings and all future Commission business to the public, as well as make public all materials and transcripts from past closed meetings.

Sincerely,



Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Government Reform



Robert T. Matsui
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Social Security
Committee on Ways and Means